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PARIS FOR ARS (DWINTON)

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SUBJECT: BENIN ENGLISH OUTREACH PROGRAM: ENGLISH COMMUNITY OASIS  
INDUCTION CEREMONY

¶1. SUMMARY: On October 30, PAS Cotonou hosted a well-attended induction ceremony for an English club named English Community Oasis. In an effort to meet the MSP goal of furthering mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of Benin, the American Cultural Center hosted this event to establish a relationship with the members of this Club who are learning English and interested in developing their leadership skills. END SUMMARY.

¶2. DATE OF ACTIVITY: October 30; First quarter, FY 10.

¶3. PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVES: Post held this event to promote the English language as a tool to further mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of Benin.

¶4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: The English Community is the name of an international NGO involved in education and capacity building. English Community Oasis, established in Benin in 2008, is the first club for English speakers and learners in Benin. In order to foster a strong sense of belonging among the membership, the induction ceremony is a compulsory step in the membership process. Further, a prospective member can only become a member after having been accepted by those who are already full members of the Club.

¶5. The program consisted of speeches by the Ambassador, the PAO, the President of the English Club English Community Oasis and the Director of the Scientific and Academic Cooperation at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the swearing-in ceremony itself.

¶6. In her opening remarks, PAO Rhonda Watson emphasized that Post supports teachers of English through training programs and teaching materials. She also stated that beyond its support for teacher training, the U.S Embassy in Benin, by sponsoring this program, wanted to show its support and encouragement for the efforts made by the English Community Oasis to promote excellence through bilingualism.

¶7. The President of English Community Oasis explained that the members participate in a 3-hour training session held each Sunday at a High School in Cotonou. During these meetings, the participants or prospective members of the Club not only have the opportunity to improve their English and their communication skills, but also to broaden their knowledge. The new inductees were presented with certificates to reward them for the training sessions they had successfully completed in the English club.

¶8. Dr. Ambroise Medegan, a former Fulbright scholarship recipient and the Director of the Scientific and Academic Cooperation at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, highlighted the importance of the English language for a successful career.

¶9. Ambassador Knight seized the opportunity to emphasize the promotion of the English language as a key aspect of the U.S. Embassy's mission and the major role played by the Public Affairs

Section in achieving this objective. He congratulated all the new members, who have worked hard and saluted the achievements that had earned them the right to be inducted into the English Community Oasis.

¶10. MPP UMBRELLA THEMES AND AUDIENCE REACHED: Promoting Mutual Understanding - Maintaining Beninese Support for the United States - Securing a Proper Platform for USG Programs in Benin. The event attracted approximately 80 guests, including students, English clubs members, lecturers, journalists, Embassy Officers and staff including Ambassador James Knight. At least fifteen Cotonou based media outlets including two TV stations, two radio stations and eight print media covered this event.

¶11. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent. The program, augmented by a skit, several musical presentations, a rendition of the Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" speech and a Michael Jackson dance imitation, was a highly successful event, appreciated by all in attendance. Participants expressed appreciation for all the encouragement offered by the various speakers, encouragement which will enable them to stay committed to develop their ability to communicate in English.

¶12. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN KIND SUPPORT: The English Community Oasis club provided refreshments after the program.

¶13. QUALITY OF USG SUPPORT: Excellent. The presence of Ambassador James Knight enhanced the success of the event. Kudos to the PAS team for putting together this program.

KNIGHT